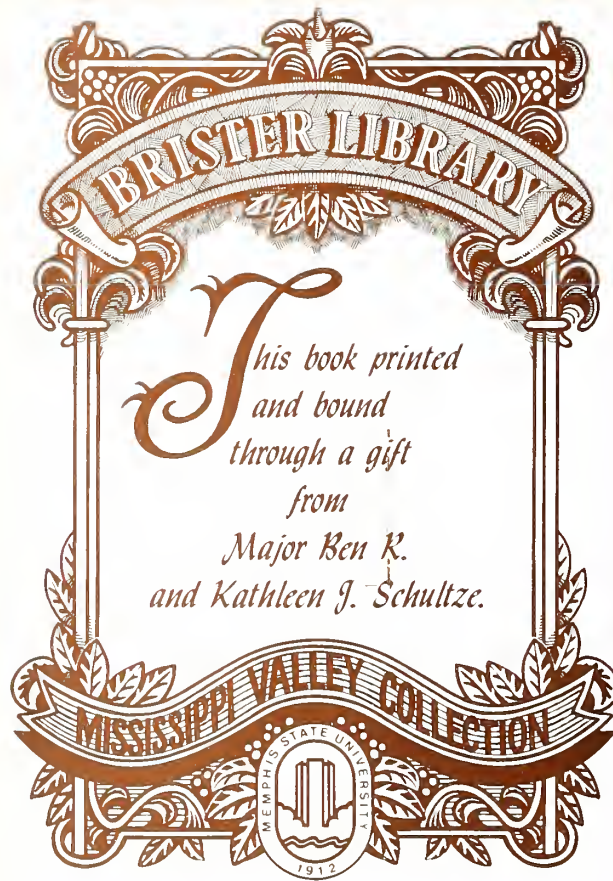


AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN ADMINISTRATION  
INTERVIEWS WITH  
MRS. BETTY STERCHI

BY - CHARLES W. CRAWFORD  
TRANSCRIBER - BETTY WILLIAMS  
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE  
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY





25680 396 OHT 4/15/92



**MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARIES**

MVC  
JK  
5252  
1976  
S72

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS LIBRARIES



3 2109 00699 0296







AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN ADMINISTRATION

INTERVIEWS WITH MRS. BETTY STERCHI


AUGUST 12, 1976

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

TRANSCRIBER - BETTY WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
LYRASIS Members and Sloan Foundation

<http://archive.org/details/oralhxxx00craw>



MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE

I hereby release all right, title, or interest in and to all of my tape-recorded memoirs to the Mississippi Valley Archives of the John Willard Brister Library of Memphis State University and declare that they may be used without any restriction whatsoever and may be copyrighted and published by the said Archives, also may assign said copyright and publication rights to serve research scholars.

PLACE

Knoxville, TN.

DATE

Aug. 12, 1976

Betty S. Sterchi  
(Interviewee)

Charles W. Crawford  
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives  
of the John Willard Brister Library  
of Memphis State University)



THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY.  
THE PROJECT IS OF AN "ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN ADMINISTRATION."  
THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MRS. BETTY STERCHI. THE PLACE IS KNOXVILLE, TEN-  
NESSEE. THE DATE IS AUGUST 12, 1976. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES  
W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RE-  
SEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mrs. Sterchi, let's start with a little back-  
ground information about you. Then we will  
get on with your part of the campaign. So if you will just sum up your  
life story in your own words.

MRS. STERCHI: You mean where I was born and that sort of  
thing?

DR. CRAWFORD: Up to the point you met Winfield Dunn.

MRS. STERCHI: Well, I am a native East Tennessean and have  
just been a homemaker and had fun in the com-  
munity. I attended the University of Tennessee. I have never been in  
politics, but I have always been interested in good government. So when  
I became involved with Winfield Dunn's campaign I was not a "politician".  
I was only interested in good government.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where were you born?

MRS. STERCHI: I was born here in Knoxville, but I lived in





Jellico, Tennessee my first thirteen years.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year were you born?

MRS. STERCHI: I was born in 1932.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you study at the University of Tennessee?

MRS. STERCHI: I was a child development major, but I did not graduate, I went into nurses' training. I had planned on being a nurse, but I met my husband and at that time and in those dark ages you could not be in nurses' training and be married. So I just quit my nurses' training and got married.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had you been active in any Republican Party or other political activities before 1970?

MRS. STERCHI: Yes and no. Like I said before, I have always been interested in good government and I chose a candidate. I didn't choose a party. So really what I have always been ...The reason I am a Republican is because I like the philosophy of the Republican Party, but I am an independent Republican. So I have supported Democrats in the past. I haven't ever really worked for them that much, but most of my close contacts in politics have been with Republicans.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you first become aware of Winfield Dunn?

MRS. STERCHI: When I first started seeing Winfield Dunn's name on buses in the early early spring when he obviously was running in other parts of the state. But that was the



first time I had ever heard of Winfield Dunn. I started asking different people who he was. Nobody knew who Winfield Dunn was. I had an opportunity to go to a coffee and meet him and I couldn't wait to go just to see who this man was--Dr. Dunn from Memphis. We just didn't know that much about him. But I wanted to meet him to find out who this other candidate was that was going to run for the Republican governor.

Because, if I remember, we had five in the race--in the Republican primary. We had so many people. We had one man that was from Knox County and that was hard too, I think. I think when you have someone from your own county that is running you almost need to go with them, but I wanted to meet all the different candidates. That's when I met Winfield. It was in the early spring. He was late getting into Knox County to organize his campaign here.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   There were several candidates at the time. Let's see, Claude Robertson from here, Bill Jenkins, and Maxey Jarman from Middle Tennessee, and there might have been another one who wasn't so well known.

MRS. STERCHI:                   Well, probably four. It seemed like a passel when we were working.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   Do you remember the occasion when you first did meet the then-to-be Governor Dunn?

MRS. STERCHI:                   Yes, I remember it very well. It was a coffee at Loretta Bevin's home and she called and was trying to get different people interested. And there were about 25 people





there. It was a very interesting meeting. He just told us about himself and what he wanted to do with the state. And I was so very impressed with his sincerity.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember about when in the spring this meeting was? Were the dogwoods blooming yet? Could it have been as late as May?

MRS. STERCHI: It could have been. I would have said it was the latter part of April or the first of May.

DR. CRAWFORD: Definitely it was after the bus advertisements?

MRS. STERCHI: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was in charge of the meeting?

MRS. STERCHI: The Bevins. Of course, E.S. Bevins was. I imagine, at that time probably E.S. was going to be the manager, but we didn't know him. The Bevins were the first people that Governor Dunn talked with here. I can't remember how they met, but they were the ones that started introducing people to Winfield Dunn.

DR. CRAWFORD: At the meeting did he make a speech or talk informally to people?

MRS. STERCHI: Yes, he did have an informal speech. Of course, anytime you come into a new situation or a new county you have to start at the very beginning. He just told us who he was and his background--his educational background and so forth, his family background--and what his plans were when he became governor of Tennessee. One of the things that interested me so much was his kindergarten program. You think back on why do you go with a certain candidate. I really can't



put my finger on why other than that I liked him very much as a person. I thought he was very sincere. If he could ever have become governor, I knew he would try and that is all we can expect of any human that we put in. We have to do a lot of trusting. I felt like he was a very trustworthy person. I had no idea that he would ever win? I was shocked! (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: It was sort of a judgement on the basis of character more than program. All that influenced the decision, although you did like his kindergarten program.

MRS. STERCHI: I think that the very fact that what he said I really felt like was sincere and then some of the things [he had] as a basis for his program. Like I say, when he mentioned the kindergarten program, this was one thing that I had been interested in for a long time and wanted the state to have. This was the first time that it had been mentioned by any candidate. So probably it was those--the kindergarten program and his personality. And I felt like he would be so easy to sell. He was such an attractive person.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you feel that if he could see enough people, expose enough people to himself and his ideas, that his chances would be good in Knox County?

MRS. STERCHI: Yes, I felt that way.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now after this meeting what happened? What did you do next?

MRS. STERCHI: I did nothing other than I kept saying to different people--by that time people were getting





more involved in the gubernatorial race--"I have met this man--this Winfield Dunn from Memphis--and I really like him. Really I don't think he has a chance, but I really think he has such good ideas and would make such a good candidate." The next thing I can remember about any kind of organization is Bevins had a luncheon and invited a group of women to the Faculty Club. I remember that I just now thought of this.

DR CRAWFORD: That was the Faculty Club at U T ?

MRS STERCHI: Uh huh. Had a luncheon and Winfield Dunn came and spoke to a group of women. I was there too.

And after I heard him talk again and I realized that he was going to run.

I just thought, "I am going to support him. I'll help him and do what little bit I can."

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have a job at that time?

MRS. STERCHI: Oh no. I just was taking care of my two little girls.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you had some free time?

MRS. STERCHI: Well, I had free time in that I have always worked in the community in different organizations.

But yes, I had some free time. As much as any woman has. So that was the way it was going to be. I didn't tell E.S., but I just thought to myself,

"Well, I am going to help him. If he wants to run for governor, I'll do what I can." Everybody has special little ways of helping a candidate.

The only thing I have ever done was talk. I never had been organized.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you learn more about organization in that



campaign?

MRS. STERCHI:

I learned a lot of things during the campaign.

But of course, Winfield Dunn's primary was quite different from any other primary in that, particularly in Knox County, he came in late. We had Claude Robertson who was a Knox County man so consequently the politicians mainly were for Claude. And I could understand that. What we had to do was to go out to the independent vote-- just people--and introduce Winfield Dunn to them, because the politicians were all with either Claude or Mr. Jarman, the way I remembered it. And then Bill Jenkins was in there too. I just don't know how in the world we did it. I just have no other idea other than we had the best candidate. That's just the way it worked out.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Well, you concluded at this meeting at the

Faculty Club that you had the best candidate, but you still had to get him exposed to people. So what action did you take to carry out this decision to support him? What did you start doing after that?

MRS. STERCHI:

O.K. We did nothing till E.S. Bevins was ap-

pointed coordinator. Then E.S. had to get some help, so he asked me to be women's coordinator. I took it, really not knowing what to do. I never had done anything like this before. But if that was what E.S. needed to help Winfield Dunn, I knew I would try. So it was "by gosh and by golly" the whole way. I just did anything and everything I could think of to do. Really it was not so structured like most cam-





paings can be because, like I say again, we were so late getting started. So I just got on the phone and called every human I could pick up. We really had a telephone chain going. That was probably the biggest thing that we had going in our favor in Knox County. Other people do it too.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you organize that now?

MRS. STERCHI: Well, what I did, every person that I could get that would support Winfield Dunn I asked them to call ten people and get those ten people interested. Then they in turn would get ten people interested. Of course, you never know how much is going on from nucleus. You just have to start in so many areas. But what I started to do was start chains in different parts of town with the people that I knew. It worked. It obviously worked. If I remember correctly we came in second in Knox County which was unbelievable. It was unbelievable!

DR. CRAWFORD: Particularly considering that you were running against two East Tennessee candidates.

MRS. STERCHI: Right. And against the politicians.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you keep up any way with the telephone campaign? How did you keep that coordinated?

MRS. STERCHI: No. As far as really keeping up with it, it was just me that had to start out. So what I did was to call everybody I knew--everybody I knew--and told them I was interested in Winfield Dunn for governor. Some people were very nice and friendly and some people said, "I really like him anyway--yeah, I'll help you." So it was this type of thing--there was no real follow-through.



I told them what they could do if they were interested in helping and then they went from that point. No, it wasn't an organized primary at all. I just had never worked, but I have worked in campaigns since then and this was the most loose one that I've ever been in.

DR CRAWFORD: For example, you did not keep up with the people you had called.

MRS. STERCHI: Oh yes, I had pages of lists of women's names. I had pages, pages, but then I didn't follow through in that I would call them back like later and be on their backs all the time. After I made an initial phone call to them, I never called them back and said, "Hey, have you called your ten people?" No, I didn't do that because what we were trying to do was just get the word out and tell people about Winfield Dunn. What I did for each person that I called if I could get them for Winfield, then I gave background as to who he was, and what he was interested in, and what he stood for. You know you have to give them the sales pitch.

DR. CRAWFORD: You have to tell people what they are supporting. Nor did you have any printed material about him to give to people? I know that they wanted to know things about him.

MRS. STERCHI: I don't remember Winfield Dunn's brochures. I'm sure there must have been, but I'm sure we had material at headquarters. I can't remember. I just remember telling them over and over about Winfield Dunn. Where he was from, how old he was, what his education was, and of course, the one thing that hurt so much at



first was that he was a dentist. A dentist running the state? And you had to get that point across that being a dentist wasn't any different than being any other kind of profession. That just happened to be his chosen field, but that he was very capable of running the state of Tennessee. I felt like he was and so this was the idea that I was trying to project to them. One thing that I kept selling was that he was Shelby County's chairman...

DR. CRAWFORD: Of the Republican Party.

MRS. STERCHI: I kept bringing that up. Of course, that gave him a better image. We just kinda forgot the dentist and went into that because that was the only political thing about Winfield Dunn. Everybody likes to know that they understand politics because politics is a strange well, when you are in politics you have to become a politician. I understand this. What you want is somebody that can achieve and accomplish what they set out and want to do. So I think this is what people wondered about Winfield Dunn if he became governor, if he would be astute enough in the field of politics to successfully accomplish these things he wanted.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you had met him and heard him talk and you were convinced that he could?

MRS. STERCHI: Very definitely.

DR. CRAWFORD: So when you called people you had no difficulty believing in what you were telling them?

MRS. STERCHI: Oh no, I believed in him 100% when I went to





work for him. No, there was no problem selling Winfield Dunn because he was the best candidate, I felt like. The only thing that I felt like was not in our favor was that he was not an astute politician. This was a question mark in a lot of people's minds.

DR CRAWFORD:                   Where did you get the list of people you started the telephone chain with? You had an address list of friends you had worked with, I suppose, something like that?

MRS STERCHI:                   I believe what I did when I first took the job I just got my little yellow notebook out and started jotting down people that I wanted to call--people that I knew were interested in good government. You know there are a lot of people that will just maybe vote and maybe won't, but you had to think who would be interested in just selecting a candidate. I am a member of some Republican women's clubs so I chose a couple of the clubs that I was in and I called. I called a lot of the women that I knew really well. That's probably where I started my list and then you have lots of friends that I wanted to get involved in politics if I could. A lot of my friends are not interested at all in politics.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   But with a good candidate they might have gotten interested?

MRS. STERCHI:                   That's right. All I wanted them to do was to talk to their friends, even if it was on the tennis court. This was the way it was in a lot of cases. They prob-



ably didn't make a lot of phone calls--a lot of structured calls--it was just talking to their friends. If I could sell them on my candidate, that would be good. It couldn't hurt. That was about the only way we were going to get his name across in Knoxville.

I did use some basically Republican women and then I went outside of that realm and went into a bridge club and my garden club and then some of my buddies.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   What kind of reception did you get when you started calling people on behalf of a person that they barely knew?

MRS. STERCHI:                   Well, it was really good because nobody knew Winfield Dunn. They listened. By the time we started our campaign here, Winfield Dunn's name, like I say, was on the buses anyway, so that was such a good start. He was coming into East Tennessee so people had read about him a little bit and had seen him on TV a little bit. So they were interested in knowing about him. So they all listened. When I first started calling, very few people had even made up their minds. There was just a group that I knew was for Claude and some that were for Maxey. I left them alone. So I just went around all those people. For some reason those other two candidates weren't catching on really that well in Knox County. They were looking for somebody. Of course, Bill Jenkins I like so very much, but he wasn't catching on, particularly in Knox County. So you know we had room here if we could find the people who would get out and work. I really don't



know what happened in Knox County because it wasn't any one person that did this for Winfield. It was Winfield as a candidate and we just did all we could. As far as I am concerned and this is my own opinion but this was a very unstructured primary.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, he didn't even have an organization before you started putting things together, perhaps at most than two months before the election.

MRS STERCHI: May or June, I cannot remember when I started working , but I remember I worked a lot at home. We just had one tinsey little room at the Holiday Inn and there wasn't enough room in the office for me to get on the phone and talk. So I just stayed on the phone at home. I just organized my day and the children would leave for school. Oh, I remember, the children went to camp, and after the children went to camp is when I really went to work.

So it was the middle of June when we really really got started. But I stayed on the phone. I sat outside and had a fantastic tan that summer because I did my phoning outside. I have a phone outside so I would sit out and called people all the time. I just decided I was going to do it. I am going to do the best I can and it just took a lot of my time. But that was about all. It was so simple. I just phoned everybody I could think of I knew.

DR CRAWFORD: Well, it sounds simple in that way, but something worked. You had a good candidate or you had a good person working for the candidate or a combination. People





must have responded well to your calls.

MRS. STERCHI: I was not the only one. There was E S. Bevins, and he had a good group of men that he had together. Of course, all of these people had friends. We all knew different people. I think this is very important in a campaign. We all were outside the political arena. I think sometimes you can work so closely in politics that you tend to call on the same people all the time and you wear them out. We were all new faces and we weren't worn out. Now I am.  
(Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, clearly at that time you were not.

MRS. STERCHI: We got a lot of new people involved in his campaign.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it may be that by by-passing the regular party structure which was mainly already committed, you were dealing more with the average voter than you would have been.

MRS. STERCHI: Right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you have any estimate of the percentage of favorable response you got from these calls?

Did most people agree that they would support him?

MRS. STERCHI: Well, I got the feeling from so many of my phone calls that, "yes, they would call ten people." This is what I was asking them. "Yes, I will support him, I like him. He sounds good and I believe he can win." You know this was



after a while when his campaign started catching on. If you are asking for percentage--I guess I thought about 75% of the people I called were going to help us with Winfield Dunn.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I know this is difficult to answer, but did you get the impression that they would have been in favor of him anyway or was it that you called and explained?

MRS. STERCHI: I think probably that it was because of a personal phone call to discuss a candidate. I was trying to think on my own opinion when I am called about a candidate. This gives me an opportunity if I do not know this candidate to ask different questions. Possibly, they would have made up their minds anyway. You have finally got to come down to some decision. But the very fact that someone took time to call and say, "I am for Winfield Dunn and let me tell you why." Then that couldn't help but have some bearing on a person's decision if they had not made up their mind or if they weren't political.

Of course, there are so many Republicans in Knox County that you don't have to worry so much about calling Democrats. I even called Democrats--it didn't matter that much to me what they were at the time that I called. And a few times the person would say, "Well, I'm a Democrat and I'll have to support somebody in my own party. But then at that time I really didn't know. I just knew my women Republican friends and I didn't know who was that active in Democrat politics and who was really active in Republican politics. I just wasn't a political person at all.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did any of the Democrats that you called offer to support him too?



MRS. STERCHI: I can't remember in the primary any Democrats.

In the general election we just had a slew.

We had so many Democrats that we appointed a Women's Coordinator [who was a Democrat. We had so many people coming into the flock from the other party.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, that was obvious in the voting total in the general election.

MRS. STERCHI: No, I cannot remember any women.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you cannot be sure, but was it your impression that the Democratic support crossed to Winfield Dunn in November mainly because of the person he was or for a negative reaction to the Democratic candidate, John J. Hooker?

MRS. STERCHI: Both. I think Winfield Dunn was an excellent candidate. I just think you had to be a died-in-the-wool Democrat to vote for John J. Winfield had everything going for him as far as I was concerned. He was in at the right time as far as his candidacy was concerned. I felt like the Hooker--I am trying to think what I thought--in my mind there was no way that Winfield Dunn could be beaten because of the caliber of person he was. I think people wanted a change. I think they were tired of the Democratic leadership. Everything was in Winfield Dunn's favor.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you get that feeling--when you first saw him or on toward the election or did it develop during the campaign?



MRS. STERCHI: Oh, this was in the general election. This was not, in my thinking, during the primary. Is that what you are asking?

DR. CRAWFORD: You became more confident as Election Day drew closer?

MRS. STERCHI: Oh yes. Well, we ran scared the whole time. But in my mind I just could not see how this man [could lose]. Winfield Dunn and Betty--the whole thing--was too perfect. If a person is intelligent at all there was just no reason in the world why they would not support the Dunns. For us to have a candidate of his caliber I really felt like there would be no way for us to lose.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you do as women's coordinator other than the calling? Did you arrange any appearances or chances for people to meet him?

MRS. STERCHI: I can't remember all that we did in the primary and get it straight in my mind. But during the time of the primary and the general election--I can't remember specific things that we did. I can remember so much about the general election. I'm sure that Winfield Dunn came in here for a few...Oh I remember. Betty came in here quite a few times and we had her meet with the women. Then she even came in for rallies. Now I can remember more.

We had always in a primary lots of rallies. Well, we have lots of rallies in a general election too, but during the primary there were lots of rallies. What we tried to do was have a spokesman for Winfield at every





rally. Well, Betty is an excellent spokesman for Winfield and everybody fell in love with her. She was as good a campaigner as Winfield was. So she came in and came to coffees, I remember now, and rallies when he couldn't come.

Like I say, in my mind, his campaign was very unstructured, and we did as many things as we could get together. But we didn't have time nor did we have very much money. That was another thing I remember. We were so poor, and we did as many things as we could afford to do. Mostly it was plain old hard work that didn't cost anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have any money raising responsibilities?

MRS. STERCHI: No, the men, the men did that and they did an excellent job of that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Especially after the primary?

MRS. STERCHI: No, I never did raise any money, I was the women's coordinator. E S. had appointed two men to be in charge of fund raising. So they took care of that solely.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was doing that now?

MRS. STERCHI: Quintin Gully, and Dick Impe. They did an excellent job.

DR. CRAWFORD: For the primary election, do you remember that day? Do you remember that night as the news came in?

MRS. STERCHI: I remember very well. I remember the day before the election I talked with someone that was for Claude Robertson. They just kind of laughed. "You know," they said,



"it is about all over now." I said, "Yeah, it is." I was so apprehensive because there was really no way to tell what we had done. Now there were lots of people that were talking about Winfield Dunn. You know, you just wonder how it is going to soak in. Though we didn't have anybody calling people on Election Day and making sure. You know how you do when you really get organized--how you do all this or have buses going to the polls. But you just wondered how effective your work had been. But anyway, the person I was talking to, just kind of laughed and said, "Tomorrow it will be over and then (he was for Claude Robertson) he felt like that he was going to win not only in Knox County, but he felt like he would win state-wide." No way did I feel like he was. Anyway that was beside the point.

But the night of the election I can remember so well. There weren't very many people that were really sitting with us. Because nobody thought we were going to have a victory party, but the very fact that we came in second was---I was numb. No, I think I was numb that we had won. Winfield Dunn had said from the very beginning that he was going to carry Shelby County. And if he could carry East Tennessee he could win it. That was their strategy. And it worked that way. It worked just the way they had it planned.

DR. CRAWFORD:                      Of course, you had trouble knowing how it  
   would turn out because there was no way to  
check back on this work you had been doing. You knew a lot of people  
had been called and that they had called others and who presumably had  
called others. But you still had no way of checking to know how it would



go.

MRS. STERCHI: Well, that's all right.

DR. CRAWFORD: And what did you do after primary election day?

I suppose you took a vacation before you did anything else.

MRS. STERCHI: What did we do afterwards? I didn't do anything because my children were coming home from camp.

I didn't know what to do. Like I said before, I had never been in a structured organization. To be working for a gubernatorial candidate that was really almost too big. So I thought, "I won't do this now, I'll help-- I'll do everything I can to help, but now we must get it into the politician's hands. We must get the people that know what they are doing. So I talked to E.S. about this.

First of all, I remember, the first thing I had to do was make a list of the things that I did in the primary. Of course, like I said I just called lots of people. So what I did, was send out a list of the people I had called and told them about the telephone chain that I had and the different little things that we did. A lot of them were so small I can't even remember right now, but we made a report. That was the first thing. I remember doing one Sunday afternoon. I made a report of what we had done in the primary--it was so trite. Here is this little report that I made and we won.

DR. CRAWFORD: It may have seemed trite, but in terms of its result something went right.



MRS. STERCHI: True, but I still maintain that I have done the same things since then and it doesn't always work. I lose a lot. I don't win very many. So a lot of it had to be with the candidate. It just had to be.

DR. CRAWFORD: Couldn't it have been partly with your commitment to the candidate? You had someone here you could believe in. Do you think that could be?

MRS. STERCHI: That's right. I think a lot of times in a political race it is not who you are for in some instances it is who you are against. In Winfield's case we were just sold on him. I wasn't sold on him because I thought he was going to win. If I had been picking a winner, I would have picked Maxey Jarman. Because I really thought he would win. Really down deep--I wouldn't have ever told anybody. I would only state this now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did you believe Jarman was leading?

MRS. STERCHI: Because he, I guess, before I had made up my mind who I would be for, but when I was thinking about candidates and when I wanted to meet Winfield Dunn, I had thought Maxey Jarman sounded good to me. He was a businessman. He was older. He had experience and big business and that is what Tennessee is. So if Winfield Dunn had not come along, I would have gone with Maxey Jarman. I knew that his campaign would have been well financed and that is very important in a campaign. And when you think back on Winfield Dunn's campaign, the campaign was so poor, and he was late getting started. He's a





a miracle! He really is a miracle!

DR. CRAWFORD: There were a lot of people who were surprised at that, however, his strategy turned out as he said, didn't it? He carried Shelby and picked up enough votes in East Tennessee. I believe he was second place in all three congressional districts so that it added up to what he had hoped it would.

MRS. STERCHI: A winner.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh huh.

MRS. STERCHI: Yeah, his strategy was very good. But here again I maintain that he was such a good candidate. Once somebody met him they had a hard time not supporting him. If you weren't a politician you would just go with him. Why not? Because you didn't have anything in it. A lot of times a political person will have to go with a certain candidate because of four different reasons. You know there is no reason for me to go into them right now, but Winfield Dunn appealed to so many types of people. That's the reason he won.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, about the report you wrote up at the request of E S. Bevins which consisted mainly of a list of people you had called. Do you remember about how many people you had on the list? What sort of records had you kept?

MRS. STERCHI: No, I really don't remember how many people. Probably not more than 300. I really can't remember. I don't have that list anymore because after the primary that list went into another list. That first primary list was my nucleus for



the general election and that is when you bring in everybody or anybody that would come into the fold. What we tried to do was to get the different losing camps. We tried to get them involved, but it never really works. It never really works. After they have worked hard in the primary--I've found this to be the way it worked--they're tired and they have lost. If I am really sold on a candidate, it is really hard to get myself back up and work for another candidate. I found this true in the last gubernatorial election. I was not for Lamar in the primary, but I wanted him to win so badly, but I had worked so hard for another candidate. It was hard for me to get back up.







THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY.  
THE PROJECT IS AN "ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN ADMINISTRATION."  
THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MRS. BETTY STERCHI. THE PLACE IS KNOXVILLE, TEN-  
NESSEE. THE DATE IS AUGUST 12, 1976. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES  
W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE.  
TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS. INTERVIEW #2.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mrs. Sterchi, after the primary elections what  
changes did you notice in the campaigning for  
the general election? What changes did you see in terms of organization  
advertising, staff members, or anything at all?

MRS. STERCHI: Well, as I remember, during the primary we  
had a few leaders, a few helpers, and a few  
people that came to help us with the campaign. After we won, there were  
lots of good leaders, good helpers. Lots of people had suggestions to  
make. I felt so much more secure after the primary, because there  
were so many astute people that came in to the campaign. Whereas before  
we were all novices. When you start thinking, you really assess what you  
are doing, and you think you are trying to elect a governor and that is a  
tremendous job. The attitude--or my attitude was: I felt like I was in  
a nest and people would help when you needed help. They really basically  
let us run our own campaign, which is good because in every section of a  
state you do things differently because the people are different. But it





was good to have a format. Before, in the primary I didn't think we had a format. Nobody really told me what to do. That would have been nice, had they told me what to do.

DR. CRAWFORD:                    You felt more secure then with leadership and direction?

MRS. STERCHI:                    Right.

DR. CRAWFORD:                    Where was this coming from? Did you notice a change in that?

MRS. STERCHI:                    It was coming from Nashville. That's where the headquarters were.

DR. CRAWFORD:                    Did you have any idea what person or persons were responsible for it?

MRS. STERCHI:                    No, because E.S. [Bevins] was the one that was advised. He was the one that really kept up with the organization of the campaign. I still did my own thing really in one sense other than I had more help, I guess, if I needed it. At one time later on in the campaign we had a state women's coordinator or maybe it was a regional women's coordinator. They came in and suggested things.

DR. CRAWFORD:                    Who was that?

MRS. STERCHI:                    Ann Tuck did something. I can't remember whether she was a state coordinator or a regional coordinator. But after the primary there were just so many people that came in to the fold that knew what to do and suggested things to do. And it just takes lots of minds to make anything work well. No one person can do a



big job like any campaign. So it was good to get some new ideas. Of course, the Republicans never having had a good candidate or winning the seat before, everybody was pretty new. It was like having a winning horse and not knowing how to run him maybe in one sense. But I felt like the campaign was run very well.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   What about the financing? How did that change after the primary?

MRS. STERCHI:                   No trouble, basically. No trouble at all. Everybody likes to give to a winner. I think that they saw Winfield Dunn as a winner. And that's the reason that a lot of Democrats came with Winfield Dunn. They didn't like Hooker to begin with and they wanted to be with a winner. And they liked Winfield. You know you can't take anything away from him on that point. He just did appeal to a lot of other party people.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   Were the increased contributions that you are referring to in the general election on a statewide basis or in Knox County?

MRS. STERCHI:                   Only in Knox County. I know nothing about the statewide. I had nothing to do with finances. But I just do know what the men did. That was Mr. Gully, and Mr. Impe that did the financing. Of course, that was hard work. I'm not saying that it was easy--that you could just go and pick it up. You had to work it a little bit and Winfield was very good about getting money. He could get money and he was willing to go see the money people.



DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have limitations because of money on any work you would have liked to have done?

Would you have done anything else if you had had more money?

MRS. STERCHI: Let me think. I guess not. We always had trouble getting materials because when you are working a campaign you have lots to do and your people want material and all so you want to have it available. We really never had enough material, but I think it was probably this way all over the state. You probably could print millions of pamphlets and they would want more. You never know how to assess.

DR. CRAWFORD: Or you wouldn't have them in the right place at the right time.

MRS. STERCHI: That's right. I would say, yes, that we had enough to work with. Not ever to have worked in a big campaign like that before it is a little hard for me to assess. I have really never worked in a campaign. And you know we really weren't rich--that we had money to spend. We were always too tight here in Knox County. I remember now that Knox County spent their own money. I believe that was the way it was. It didn't come in from any other place. If you didn't raise it, you didn't spend it. If I remember correctly, we had money to spend.

DR. CRAWFORD: And it came out just a little in the black, didn't you?

MRS. STERCHI: I believe we did. In fact I am sure we did.



DR. CRAWFORD:                   What about your advertising? Did you do any  
of it locally or did you depend altogether on  
the advertising from Noble-Dury in Nashville?

MRS. STERCHI:                   I believe it all came from Nashville other than  
one thing that I decided that I wanted to do for  
Election Day. And I had it done here in Knoxville. I believe everything  
else came from Nashville. All that I can remember.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   What was that exception?

MRS. STERCHI:                   I had a card made, a little hand-out card that  
everybody loved after I had it made up. It  
was a good idea. I want to put it down because it was so good. Do you  
remember during the campaign Winfield Dunn's picture and the flag in the  
background. I wanted that done on a little hand-out card for Election  
Day around here. You just have to give them something. They just like  
to have something to give out. So what I wanted to do on my little hand-  
out card, I wanted to put his platform. He had a ten-point platform.  
That's what we did. We put the ten points. It read: "Winfield Dunn  
believes." Isn't that right?

DR. CRAWFORD:                   And then ten items, I believe?

MRS. STERCHI:                   Yeah, okay. That's what we put on the back:  
"Winfield Dunn believes:" And the ten points.  
It really went over! It went over so well. It was a good thing for the  
workers to have because when they were asked questions the answer was on  
the back of the card. That was the only thing that I can remember that





we did locally. That was just a little brainstorm. We had some more made or some of the other counties had some more made here and used it. They never got all over the state, but that is an idea for another campaign. I thought it was so good.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you paid for that with the money raised here in Knox County?

MRS. STERCHI: Right. It didn't come from Nashville.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the meetings in the general election? What kind of meetings did you have in Knoxville?

MRS. STERCHI : What kind of meetings did Winfield Dunn have or did the organization have?

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, deal with them separately.

MRS. STERCHI: In the general election his meetings were so much larger than they were in the primary and when we had things like rallies where hundreds of people came. Whereas in the primary when we had a group together, if we got fifty people together we had a fantastic group. It was just different. Just more people came, more people worked, we had more money to do things. So everything that he did: he had fund raising breakfasts, he had fund raising dinners. And everywhere he went there were hundreds of people involved. Then getting to the other meetings, I was just thinking when you first said meetings we just met with everybody all the time. That to me was one of the hardest things that I did, was having to be away from home so much. There was always somebody that needed you in so many meetings you had to attend at night because that is when you got your groups together. You got your precincts



together or your district together or your zones together, however it was that we felt a need.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   How did you adjust this to your home life?  
                                  How did you handle all the responsibilities  
there and work so many hours?

MRS. STERCHI:                   It was just very hard. I would not do it  
                                  again. If I had known what I know now,  
because my children were young, I couldn't have done it. But you know  
how you get into something and you can't quit. There was no way I could  
quit because I couldn't tell everybody that I knew to quit. It got so big.  
This type of a campaign is not for people that have responsibilities--  
a lot of them.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   It demands a great deal of time. Where did  
                                  you manage it in this time? Did you continue  
to do your work at home? Did you go to headquarters?

MRS. STERCHI:                   Worked at headquarters from 9 until 5 every  
                                  day, excluding Saturday. We had meetings on  
Saturday and sometimes on Sunday. Then like three times a week at night  
after the campaign got started. A lot of times we met with Brock people.  
We organized together in order to get the work done effectively, which  
was a good idea in some cases.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   Did you have an especially large rally with  
                                  them here, do you remember?

MRS. STERCHI:                   The Brock people?



DR. CRAWFORD: Uh huh.

MRS. STERCHI: No. I never remember us having anything. We always invited them to come, but it was for Winfield Dunn. It was not Brock and Dunn. I don't remember any that were billed like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you start to get a different reaction from the people you had called after the primary? Did it get better?

MRS. STERCHI: Well...

DR. CRAWFORD: You were getting perhaps 75% favorable response during the primary. Did people start seeming more receptive to calls later?

MRS. STERCHI: Everybody yes. Most everybody that I called was happy to do anything they could. But remember this, this is a Republican town. Then by that time there are more people in the fold. But what happened after the primary--the difference between what I did in the primary and what I did in the general election. It got so that other people were doing what I was doing and I was worrying about it. I got it set up all over Knox County, organized for the women--remember, this is not men so much. They had a man's coordinator, but I worked mainly with women. So then from then on I had to set up so I would just check with my coordinators in the different districts. They were making the contracts with the people. I was just pushing them. Then they were calling me and telling me their problems. That was really about all



I did--listen and worry.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have difficulty with any other problems?

MRS. STERCHI: No, I can't think of any.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of problems would they generally have?

MRS. STERCHI: The problems they had were when it would come down to organizing a precinct. And what we wanted to do is to have block organization. Then to get somebody on each street. You know when it really got down to the organization and trying to make contact with every person and get them registered and all these things--that's where it gets to be--it's the people out in the precincts that really have the hardest times, I think. Because they're the ones that contact the voter and if they can't get people to help them, they just have this really hard job. Here I am up in the office pushing them and suggesting names and all this, but they are the ones that have to get the work done because they get the vote out in the long run. We just sit up there and worry about it.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's known as administration.

MRS. STERCHI: That's what my job ended up being. I was just involved with a group of people, not the mass of people, that I had been involved with in the primary. I just didn't make that many personal calls any more--couldn't. I was so busy pushing.

DR. CRAWFORD: What preparations did you make for Election Day? How were you using your ladies other





than simply wanting them to vote?

MRS. STERCHI: We had Knox County set up into legislative districts. We had eight of those. From there I had a district coordinator in each legislative district. Then we broke it down from there into a man and a woman. So we either had one person in a district or two, depending on how rural it was and how they functioned best. In a lot of cases we had a women's coordinator and a men's coordinator in a district and those two people appointed their precinct chairman and their co-chairman and then those two people took care of the precinct. We had it organized down to the precinct and from the precinct to a zone and from a zone to a block. That's the way we did it.

So then when you ask about what we did for Election Day we did everything we knew to do. We had the blocks set down so these block chairmen knew who went to vote on their block and of course we had the yard signs, and we had the poll watchers. We had all of it organized from the precinct level, because that is where you get your votes.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were well prepared. What about your poll watching? How much concern did you give that?

MRS. STERCHI: We had a poll watcher. Now whether that does that much good I question. I think it is good to have one because if people think they are being watched--we have some precincts that are pretty bad--but then everybody has a poll watcher. So there are lots of poll watchers walking all over the voting precinct.



That's just another something that you have to have. Yes, we had all this.

DR. CRAWFORD: On Election Day what did you do?

MRS. STERCHI: What did I do?

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh huh.

MRS. STERCHI: I stayed at the headquarters and I answered [the phone]. We had a couple of numbers where people could call in and ask for rides. That was one thing we did. So we had cars there all day if they called in, but there weren't that many calls. Because we had it set up so in the neighborhoods with transportation. But we had in the paper a number that you could call if you want to vote for Winfield Dunn. I don't know how we put it. I sat there all day-- what else was I to do. I had done it all. I can remember checking to see if everything was done the week before. I can remember only one precinct-- I have forgotten how many precincts we have in Knox County--but there was only one precinct in Knox County that we really didn't have organized and that was one out west (Knoxville) [with] lots of Democrats out there. I never could get anybody to work it. I remember that day, that really bothered me. I wondered where we could have gotten somebody. But anyway, we did all we could--and I'm not saying "me", I am saying "we". We all did everything we knew to do. We did it well. We really got a good vote out, but it took a lot of people working hard.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see, you were at headquarters that night, weren't you?



MRS. STERCHI: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you start deciding that you had won?

MRS. STERCHI: It was early. We had all the counties that were calling in. Knox County was like a regional office where people could come here and get materials and all. So a lot of the smaller counties--the surrounding counties--were to call Knox County and report in. So by the time that we had all of our counties in, plus we were hearing these other things and getting these phone calls from different parts of the state, plus I knew we were going to win anyway. I really wasn't that surprised by the time it all came down to the wire. There was no way--no way we could lose!

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you do after the election?

MRS. STERCHI: What did I do the next day?

DR. CRAWFORD: As follow up.

MRS. STERCHI: The next day Winfield Dunn wanted to go through the state. He wanted to fly. Let's see how he did it. He went to Memphis and he went to Knoxville, and he went to Johnson City, and maybe he went to Chattanooga. I can't remember how many stops he made. So this was two days after, I believe it was, after the campaign. We were all worn out. And you know like the next day you want to breathe, but they called us from Nashville and said Winfield wanted to come in the next day and thank everybody. Thank his workers--so here we go again. I never shall forget having to get on the phone and call all the radio stations and the television stations and the newspaper and then we had to get somebody to have a reception for him. We had it at the



Farragut. I never shall forget it. Then this is when I called my eight people. I said, "Call your people. Winfield Dunn is coming in, we want everybody at the Farragut." It was very simple. We had such contact with our people that it wasn't any problem. It was just that it was more contacts after...

Anyway, he came in and oh I can't remember how many people came to the Farragut Hotel to shake hands with Winfield Dunn. He almost died, he had such a bad cold. I thought we were going to lose our new governor. I remember he was so sick that day. I think he had shaken so many hands. Do you remember this? He had something wrong with his hand.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, perhaps it was just as well if he was ill the day after the election rather than before. You can afford that better.

MRS. STERCHI: This is what we did right after the election. We got ready for Winfield to come through and say "thank you". Then it wasn't many days, I can remember, we just hurried real fast and got the office cleaned up and got out. That was it. That was the end of the campaign.

DR. CRAWFORD: Very well. What contact did you have with him afterward?

MRS. STERCHI: Soon after, he asked me to be on the inaugural committee. I was on the inaugural committee. It was more "maybe" in name only, because I was here in Knox County. They were doing the inauguration of course, in Nashville and I couldn't be down





there a lot. Robin Beard and Dorch Oldham and I were the three coordinators. So here again I did a lot of worrying and really didn't do a whole lot of work until the last couple of weeks. Then I went down there and I stayed because it was so hectic. They just needed another body. I helped out in Nashville. But it was just no way I could leave my family. It was getting harder and harder to leave the family by that time.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   What did you do after the inaugural? Did you see the Governor and Betty any after or during the next few years?

MRS. STERCHI:                   Occasionally. When he would come into town, occasionally I would see him. But like I say I would see him when a crowd would get together, but I am just not very political. I don't really like political things a lot and meetings and all that. I go when I feel like I should go, but just to go for the sake of going. No, I didn't go to every ground breaking and all that. I just didn't do that. And then I saw Betty. I consider Betty a good friend--a new good friend. I love her very much and I saw her on occasions. I really saw her more than I did the Governor. Because they were so very busy. No, I was just through, out and defended him.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   You certainly put a lot into the campaign.

MRS. STERCHI:                   Well, a lot of people did. Everybody had to work. They probably had to work harder than I did. It's just that I get tired.

DR. CRAWFORD:                   Is there anything that you think should be a



part of this account that we have not done yet?

MRS. STERCHI: Well, no, that's a hard question.

DR. CRAWFORD: Are there any incidents that illustrate anything important about him or the campaign?

MRS. STERCHI: My mind is just blank at this point. Are you talking about him as a candidate or...

DR. CRAWFORD: Or as a person, either one, or as a governor.

MRS. STERCHI: Well, I feel like as a governor, I felt so secure once he won, because I knew that he would try so very hard to do a good job. And that is all any of us can expect of anyone and particularly our elected officials. I think we tend to put them on a pedestal and we expect so many things from them. When we have to realize that they have so many decisions to make and so many times we don't realize what all they have had to weigh to begin with before they make their decisions. I felt like Winfield would be so fair and would do the very best that he could and in every aspect of his term. I have no regrets in supporting him in any way. I think he and Betty Dunn will go down as two of our finest leaders. I was very proud of them. I think the whole state was very proud of them as our first family.

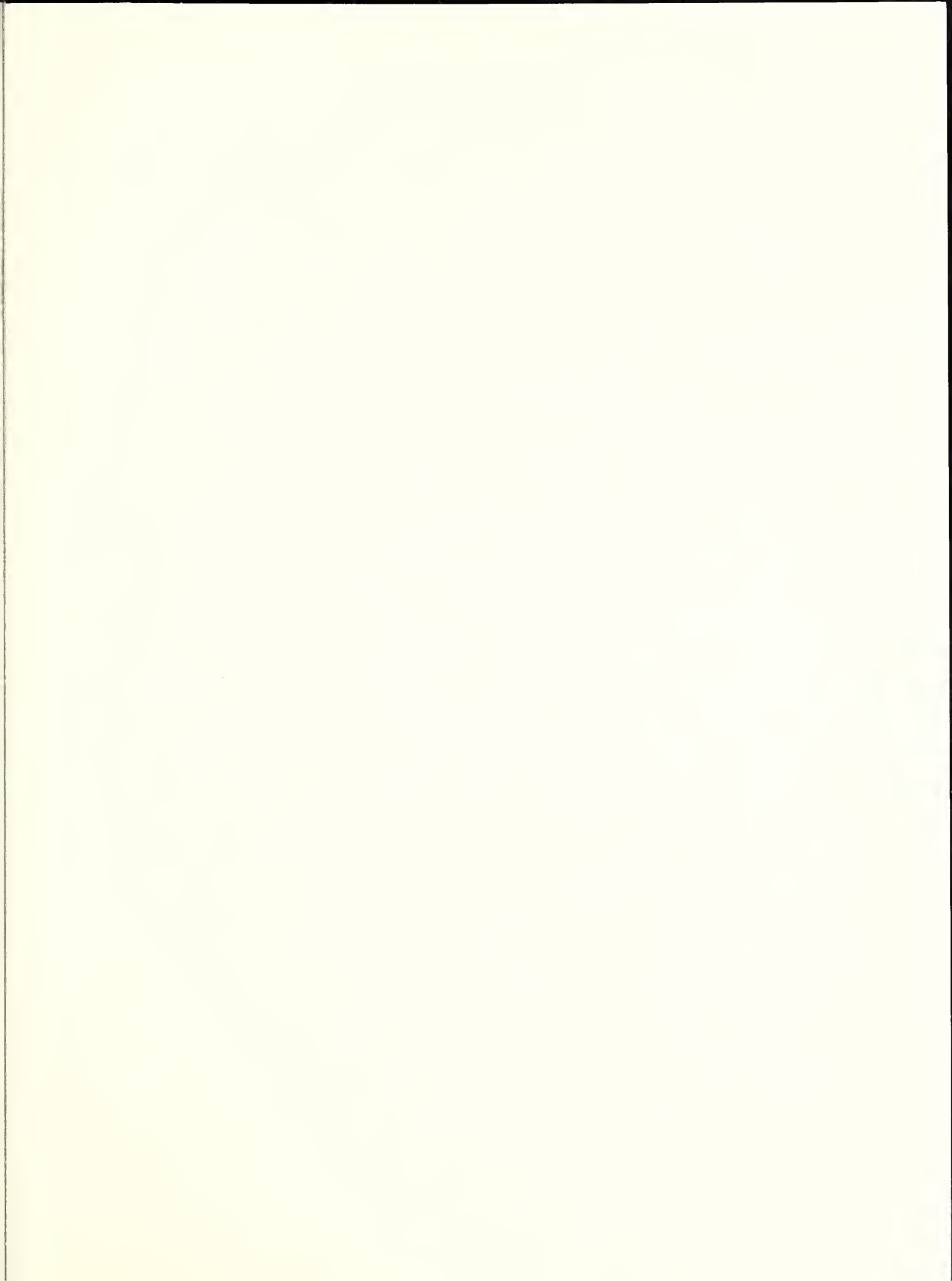
I would like to see more of their caliber want to lead government.

DR. CRAWFORD: Thank you.













HECKMAN  
BINDERY INC.



OCT 88



N. MANCHESTER,  
INDIANA 46962



